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Jibla hospital transfer moving forward

RICHMOND, Va. (BP and ABP) — The Dec. 30 killings of three International Mission Board (IMB) workers and the wounding of a fourth worker at the Baptist hospital in Jibla, Yemen, disrupted an already complicated process of turning over responsibility for the facility to a nonreligious Yemeni charity, according to two Southern Baptist missionary leaders.

Now Yemen's health minister has named an administrator and a nursing director to get the hospital operating again until details about the facility's future can be worked out.

In September, IMB reached an agreement for the People's Charitable Society to assume the costs of running the hospital. In return, the IMB agreed to continue providing personnel to minister at the 45-bed medical center.

The transition, however, had not progressed according to the timetable, which called for a switchover at the end of the year, said IMB President Jerry Rankin.

"The charity is headed by a Yemeni physician who also serves as the country's foreign minister," Rankin explained. "The demands of his government position have greatly increased in recent months as Yemen has had to deal with pressing issues of terrorist cells at home, complications in its relationships with the United States, and the confrontation between the United Nations and Iraq."

As the end of the year approached, details of the transfer had not been worked out, and hospital staff members were preparing to temporarily suspend operations until the transfer could be completed, Rankin said. Then came Dec. 30.

A gunman smuggled a semi-automatic weapon past soldiers guarding the hospital and shot four Southern Baptist workers. Physician Martha Myers, administrator Bill Koehn, and purchasing manager Kathy Gariety were killed, and pharmacist Don Caswell was seriously injured.

The hospital was locked down as most of the Southern Baptist workers gathered in the capital, Sanaa, to minister to each other.

The attack created even more uncertainty about the transition of the hospital, said Elias Moussa, administrative associate for IMB work in northern Africa and the Middle East. Southern Baptist workers had affirmed their desire to continue at the hospital and the



TRANSFER UNDERWAY — The Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen (left), founded by Southern Baptists 35 years ago, encompasses several buildings on a compound adjacent to a mosque with a minaret. Three Southern Baptist workers were slain there and a fourth worker was wounded on December 30 by a lone gunman. The International Mission Board is moving toward the transfer of the hospital to a Yemeni charity. (BP photo)

IMB remained committed to providing staff, but it was unclear who would eventually assume operational responsibility for the facility.

Southern Baptists established the hospital 35 years ago on land owned by the Yemeni government. IMB workers operated the medical center under a contract with Yemen's Ministry of Health that had to be renewed each year.

In the months before her death, Gariety, the hospital's purchasing agent for 10 years, worked behind the scenes to try to keep the facility in the hands of Christians.

In an email interview, she said the IMB's press releases about the transfer "made it sound like everything is just fine and all the [IMB mission workers] are happy and pleased, when that is just not the case." She questioned whether the government would follow through and keep the hospital open.

"Even our local employees believe this is a bad idea, that within a year the hospital will be stripped of all supplies and then closed," she wrote.

"Somehow, I feel that the everyday SBC contributor needs to know just what is going on and that the way we do missions is changing, and not all of us believe it is for the best," she wrote. "...I am embarrassed by the IMB, when so many others can see the positive side of keeping the hospital as a Christian beacon..."

Several days after the shooting Ken Clezy, an Australian surgeon working at the Jibla hospital, said he too is doubtful the hospital will survive. "We have lost so many staff because of all the months of uncertainty that there is no way the place can be kept open."

"My own feeling is that Jibla is finished, but I may be wrong," said Clezy, who had made plans to leave Yemen before the shooting.

Al Lindholm, IMB area business manager charged with overseeing the transfer of the hospital, is more optimistic. The hospital will open as soon as possible, he said, although no one is sure when. "Pledges have been made at the highest level of the government." The rapid progress is "exciting," he

added. "We're already seeing stability return to the staff."

The IMB was working toward the hospital transition because Southern Baptists had not been coming forward to fill 35 medical positions at the hospital. As a result, the board had to employ medical workers from other countries at an annual cost of about \$500,000. Finding another group to assume that responsibility would free those financial resources to expand Southern Baptist ministry efforts in the country.

"For more than two years, the board tried to recruit other Great Commission Christian groups to assume the responsibility, but the few who expressed interest — in spite of reports to the contrary — were unable to demonstrate they could provide the needed operating capital," Rankin said. "When the Peoples Charitable Society, a Yemeni charity whose identity is not religious, expressed interest this past August, we saw it as an answer to prayer."

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

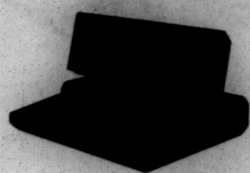
Gariety laid to rest

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Profiling: alive and well in America

He is among Mississippi Baptists' best and brightest young people. Always known as a Christian leader by peers and adults alike, he graduated at the top of his class from one of our Baptist institutions of higher learning and promptly tackled medical school with the vigor and enthusiasm typical of his outlook on life. Later this spring, one of the country's most prestigious medical schools will confer upon him the degree, Doctor of Medicine.

Anyone who has helped pray a friend or loved one through medical school knows that the most demanding part of this young man's long quest for a career in medicine is yet to come. After a person graduates from four grueling years of medical school, he/she must then complete a multi-year "residency" before being allowed to fully practice medicine without oversight.

In layman's terms, a residency consists of long hours of hard work — on call several days at a time with only sporadic sleep is not unusual — while encountering the most demanding and stressful circumstances imaginable. All of this occurs under the critical eye of supervising physicians, many of whom could be politely described as unsympathetic to the plight of the young residents under their management.

This is a make-or-break proposition for medical school graduates, and getting into the best available residency program can often determine the course of one's career for a lifetime of medical practice. The best residency programs set the highest standards and are able to pick and choose among the best applicants.

Some of the most sought-after residency programs in the country have invited our Mississippi Baptist young doctor-in-waiting to apply for their programs. He has the academic standing and professional recommendations to be accepted into any of the top-rated programs.

His face-to-face interviews have taken him to some of the most desirable residency programs in the country. He has interviewed at institutions that have treated kings and presidents, institutions that are known around the world and frequently appear in news reports announcing breakthrough treatments and cutting-edge research.

From his first interview, however, he has noticed a disturbing trend. When the interviewers actually sit down with him and begin to review his file, their facial expression and subsequent questions often betray their bias.

"I see you're from the South. Are you religious?" they ask, in one form or another. When our young man answers honestly in the affirmative, the questions become much more specific.

"Do you believe the birth of Jesus was a historical event?" is a paraphrase of only one of the questions he was asked during an interview. There were questions at other interviews, equally as obvious and penetrating.

He has been repeatedly profiled. At a time in our country when profiling is being roundly condemned as a law enforcement tactic, a basis for employment, or for any other reason, it's still permissible to profile Christians. No one notices, and no one protests. It's accepted and promoted at many of our social, cultural, political, and academic institutions.

Discrimination usually is subtle, just under the legal surface, carefully phrased and artfully delivered but nonetheless dis-

"O WISE ONE—
WHERE CAN
I FIND
TRUE WISDOM?"

"WELL, NOT FROM AN
OLD GUY SQUATTING
ON A MOUNTAINPEAK,
THAT'S FOR SURE!"



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crimination — but that's okay where Christians are concerned. The pagans may not be tossing us to the lions, but they are intent on marginalizing our impact on the future of this country. People who call sin by its real name have never been welcomed by the social elitists and cultural celebrities of any generation.

Still, it is up to us to resist the profiling and discrimination. It's up to us to put aside the distractions thrown at us by the evil one and to keep our eyes on the prize (Matt. 28:18-20).

After what our Savior did for us, it's the least we can do for Him.

GUEST OPINION:

New name, same evil



By James A. Smith Jr.
Executive Editor
Florida Baptist Witness

"It's a free way of getting 'pro-choice' into a news story, even if editors don't allow the words to be used in the reporter's voice," Emory University legal historian David J. Garrow told The New York Times.

Up to 20 states will be targeted by the NARAL blitz that will include print and television advertising, a national petition drive, and even door-to-door canvassing that hopes to gain two million new members for the lobby. The advertising campaign will concentrate on two groups of women: the under-35 generation that has come of age since Roe v. Wade and "suburban women who, though fiscally conservative, have been more progressive on social issues," reports The Times.

NARAL leaders are right to be concerned that their ugly cause may be losing ground.

According to CNS-News.com, a Zogby poll taken after the 2002 mid-term elections found that one-fifth of Americans have a less favorable opinion of abortion now than a decade ago and pro-life support had nearly doubled when compared with the number of people who more closely identify with the pro-abortion agenda. A 1999 Princeton Survey Research poll found that 70% of women support more restrictions on abortion.

"This mobilization will secure the right to choose the same way we won it — one American, one neighborhood, one community, one state, and eventually one nation at a time," Michelman said.

What an outrageous lie! Abortion was not won in the democratic fashion claimed by Michelman; it was imposed on

our nation with only seven votes on the United States Supreme Court and over the objection of virtually every state legislature in America, which prohibited the killing of unborn children in 1973.

Just because NARAL has changed its name, no one should be confused about the lobby's steadfast purpose: absolute legal protection — without any regulation or limitation — for the "choice" to kill unborn human life. "Abortion." Even though it's no longer in its name, that's what NARAL champions.

As the pro-abortion lobby deceptively cloaks its agenda in order to win the political battle to allow the destruction of children, the prophet Micah's message to Israel is one we must embrace 30 years into the struggle for the sanctity of human life in America: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:9).

In a day of pro-life peril and promise, let us seek justice for the unborn, while offering mercy to women and their children, knowing that God is indeed in control.

NAMB to kick off new growth campaign

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — What would it take for Southern Baptists to baptize one million people, begin 100,000 new intentionally evangelistic Bible study groups, and start 2,500 new churches in a single year?

"There's not a system or a program in place to produce one million baptisms," said John Yarbrough, vice president of evangelization at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). "If we could do it, then we wouldn't need God, but with God all things are possible."

Such is the heartfelt conviction of a national task force made up of Southern Baptists on the local, state, and national level who have set convention-wide goals in 2005 for baptisms and new intentionally-evangelistic Bible study units, as well as new churches.

To date, the SBC's best years for baptisms and church plants are 1972 with 445,725 baptisms and 1999's mark of 1,747 new Southern Baptist churches, according to statistics recorded by NAMB.

After more than two years of praying and planning, representatives from NAMB, LifeWay Christian Resources, Woman's Missionary Union, SBC Seminaries, SBC Executive Committee, state conventions, and associations have announced a national emphasis called, What Now, America? and for Canada, What Now, Canada? The emphasis is being launched this year and will culminate in an evangelistic media campaign in 2005.

By posing the question: "What Now?" organizers say they are

prompting Southern Baptists and the culture at large to pause and take inventory of their lives to determine if they are truly experiencing all that God desires for them.

Task force members describe this national campaign as a means to equip and mobilize Southern Baptists for an evangelism and church planting movement unprecedented in the convention's 158-year history.

J. Robert White, executive director of the Georgia Baptist Convention and chairman of the What Now, America? national task force, challenged each Southern Baptist church, association, and state convention to set their own goals as part of reaching the larger convention-wide goals.

"We want every Southern Baptist to be involved in this exciting challenge to reach our nation for Christ, but this is not a program with assigned

goals," White said. "We believe God desires to do something greater than we can even envision."

White said the Georgia convention has set a goal to record 50,000 baptisms in 2005, eclipsing that state convention's current annual level of 37,000.

Bill Taylor, director of LifeWay's church resources network partnerships, said the SBC goals for baptisms, new intentionally-evangelistic Bible study units, and church plants capture much of the heart and passion of Southern Baptists.

"We have always been a denomination that wants to reach the unsaved and unchurched with the gospel of Jesus Christ," Taylor said. "New Bible study groups that facilitate spiritual growth and mutual accountability often reach the lost and unchurched in larger numbers than existing groups."

"Establishing new Bible study groups is foundational in starting new churches as well as extending the evangelistic reach of existing churches."

Richard Harris, vice president of church planting at NAMB, added, "The task force believes that focusing on baptizing new believers,

starting new Bible study units and planting new congregations will capture the healthy, reproduction concept of the New Testament and challenge Southern Baptists to refocus their energies and resources on God's primary agenda."

To that end, the national task force is calling for at least one million Southern Baptists this year to commit to pray regularly for personal repentance, personal revival, and a national spiritual awakening. This convention-wide prayer initiative, called Be... One In A Million, is based on 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Participants can register for the prayer initiative at www.namb.net/prayer. Many

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Baptist state conventions and SBC entity websites also have links to the registration site. Those who register and have e-mail capabilities will receive weekly prayer requests throughout 2003, including heart-searching questions and selected Scripture passages to help undergird their prayer efforts.

Yarbrough described prayer as the most crucial step toward realizing a movement of God necessary to fulfill the convention's goals for baptisms, Bible study units and new church starts in 2005.

"Repentance always precedes revival and revival always results in evangelism," Yarbrough said.

Beginning in February, more information about What Now, America? and What Now, Canada? will be available online at www.whatnowamerica.com or www.whatnowcanada.com. Telephone: (770) 410-6305. E-mail: whatnow@namb.net.

Looking back

10 years ago

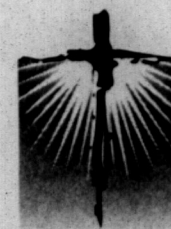
Southern Baptist Freemasons participate in a letter writing campaigns to bring Masons to the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston to defend their lodge membership and deny any conflict with Christian doctrine. The response comes as Baptists await a study on Freemasonry from the Home Mission Board.

20 years ago

The Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention thanks Mississippi Baptist Jerry Clower for his ten-year association with the program, Country Crossroads, naming him "Ambassador at Large" for his contributions.

30 years ago

Mississippi Baptists' first Royal Ambassador Congress is planned for Calvary Church, Jackson. Several hundred Royal Ambassadors from every section of the state are expected to participate. The event is sponsored by the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
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FRONT PAGE

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| Slain IMB worker known for compassion



Gariety

GREENFIELD, Wis. (BP) — Tears welled up, but so did smiles and laughter as hundreds gathered at Layton Avenue Church in Greenfield, Wis., to remember their beloved missionary friend Kathy Gariety.

Gariety's body had been laid to rest in Milwaukee on January 6 in snow-covered Holy Cross Cemetery. The 53-year-old and two other Southern Baptist workers — physician Martha Meyers, age 57, and hospital administrator William Koehn, age 60 — lost their lives Dec. 30 when a lone gunman shot them during a staff meeting at the Jibla Baptist

Hospital in Yemen. Myers and Koehn were buried the following day on the hospital grounds in Yemen.

Though some friends and family continue to struggle with how such a tragedy could happen, others have taken comfort in knowing that the Gariety, who was single, was where she wanted to be. They recalled her tenacity, her stubbornness, her smile, her passion for the people of Yemen, and her ability to rally others to give to the needs of so many who lived there.

"She had conviction, she had commitment, she had the fruits of the Spirit in her life," said Keith Chase, Gariety's close friend and pastor for 15 years. "Kathy knew that faith in God meant trusting in God no matter what, no matter when, no matter where. Her faith was strong as anyone I'd ever known."

Chase recalled a trip he took with his wife to Yemen, where Gariety served 10 years as the hospital's purchasing manager. He remembers her popularity with the people there — particularly the children.

"As soon as we got past the gate, children swarmed around Kathy," he said. "It took 20 minutes to take a five-minute walk."

Clara Alcott also recounted the influence Gariety had on her as a youth director and Sunday School teacher at the church. "She was a consistent presence in my life," Alcott said. "She was a good teacher because she was personable and strong."

"It's very important for women to have a strong Christian woman's presence in their lives and she was. I saw somebody finishing the race, and I saw someone finishing the race sprinting."

Thai Hua, who moved from Vietnam to the United States without his family, recalled how Gariety helped him during a difficult and uncertain time.

"She helped me get my first job at a bookstore," Hua said. "A lot of people say things and don't mean it, but when she said something, she meant it. She meant a lot to me."

Doris Moorman, who sang Gariety's favorite song, To the Ends of the Earth,

during the memorial service, said the slain worker had touched their lives when she led the youth group.

The day before the news of the tragedy in Yemen broke, one of Moorman's sons was flipping through a Bible Gariety had given him as a gift. On one page, she had written: "May God's Word have the final say in every decision you make."

"She certainly pointed people to Jesus and radiated his love," Moorman said. "She did what she talked about and risked her life. She trusted the Lord and put her life in his hands. I'm looking forward to the day when we will see her again."

While many were pressuring him to go to seminary, Gariety encouraged Cory Braatz to be a pastor for a couple of years first and then go to seminary once he knew that was what God called him to do fulltime, he said.

He followed her advice and later completed seminary. Today, he is pastor of Como Community Church in Lake Geneva.



LAI TO REST — Family and friends offer final farewells during graveside services for Kathleen Gariety outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The International Mission Board (IMB) worker and two of her colleagues lost their lives in an attack by a lone Yemeni gunman at Jibla Baptist Hospital on Dec. 30. A fourth IMB worker was seriously wounded. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

Gariety tolerated danger to live among Yemeni

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (BP) — Kathleen Gariety knew the immense danger of living in Yemen as an American and a Christian, but she saw the people around her as good friends and neighbors, her pastor told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Keith Chase, pastor of Layton Avenue Church in Milwaukee, and his wife Joanne recalled Gariety's embrace of God's call to help people in Yemen.

"That's not the first place you would choose to go, but it became the place she would choose to be," Joanne Chase told the Journal Sentinel. "She is a person who is able to look beyond stereotypes and politics and see into people's hearts, and she was very concerned about the people."

Gariety, age 53, was one of three Southern Baptist International Mission Board personnel killed Dec. 30 by a lone gunman who smuggled a rifle into the Jibla

Baptist Hospital in Yemen where Gariety had been a purchasing manager for a decade.

"From the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, she was devoted to this ministry and felt that God had called her to be involved in this hospital," Keith Cogburn, executive director of the Lakeland Baptist Association in Wisconsin, told the Journal Sentinel.

Friends said her title of purchasing manager understated her complex work in keeping the hospital stocked with linens, medicine and equipment. On trips to the States, she was known to speak about her work at the hospital and coordinate the shipment of thousands of dollars worth of donated supplies back to Yemen.

The Journal Sentinel reported Dec. 30 that Gariety opted to live in a small apartment among the people of Yemen instead of housing provided on the hospital compound because she wanted to be more of a friend than a foreigner.

Some who knew Gariety have used the word martyr to describe

her and the way she died.

"I see a martyr as someone willing to put their life on the line for something they believe in strongly," David Moorman, a friend from Layton Avenue Baptist Church, told the Journal Sentinel about Gariety. "In her case, Kathy was quite worthy, and I have no problem calling her a martyr. She died carrying out her mission."

Keith Chase said the three hospital workers who were killed would never have called themselves martyrs. They would prefer to be seen as people who loved the Yemeni people enough to lay down their lives for them, he told the Journal Sentinel.

He also said people who grieve the loss of the workers should pray for the killer.

"We are called to love our enemies. They would want us to pray and to recognize that the vast majority of the Yemeni people condemn the acts of the killer as much as we do," Chase said. "It would tarnish the life and ministry of these people to allow hatred to win."



FAMILY COMFORTED — Keith Chase (center), pastor of Layton Avenue Church in Greenfield, Wisconsin, comforts Pat (left) and Jerry Gariety, sister and brother of Kathleen Gariety who died Dec. 30 in an attack at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen. Gariety served with Chase as minister of youth for the Greenfield congregation before beginning her service in Yemen. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

Performing Arts Festival launches Feb. 21

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — There is still time to register for the 2003 Christian Performing Arts Festival on February 21-22 at Ridgcrest Church in Madison, according to the annual event's lead planner.

Harvey Ellis, youth consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry (DFM) Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), said there is plenty of room for everyone who wants to learn more about the use the performing arts in evangelism and church work.

"This weekend offers something for the entire church family — conferences to help your church staff be more creative in worship services, to better equip youth ministers and leaders for youth ministry and mission opportunities, to examine great old and new approaches to recreation, and to explore ways to use media, puppetry, clowning, and drama.

"These conferences are planned for both adults and students, and our hope is that you will consider being a part of this weekend in 2003," said Ellis.

Registration will begin at 5:45 p.m. on February 21. A pair of sessions will be held during the January 21 program, which will close at 9:25 p.m. with a time of Creative Worship. The January 22 program will begin at 8 a.m. and adjourn at around 3:30 p.m. Three sessions will be held during the January 22 program. Participants will be able to choose from



99 different conferences during the five session times (all the topics will not be available at every session time). A summary of the conference topics includes:

- Ballooning.
- Ventriloquism.
- Various aspects of clowning.
- Acting and character development.
- Script writing.

- Auditions and directing.
- Lighting design.
- Special effects.
- Design and utilization of puppetry.
- Retreat planning.
- Creating edible activities for kids.
- Christian showmanship.
- Visual reality (youth ministry).
- Sports and games.
- Recreation ideas.
- Computer-generated presentations.
- Digital camera basics.

Registration cost is \$30 per person and will include lunch on February 22. Checks should be made payable to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Leaders of groups of ten or more participants will receive free registration. Registrations postmarked by January 31 will be mailed a listing of the classes for each session. No childcare will be provided.

The Christian Performing Arts Festival is sponsored by the DFM and Church Music Departments of MBCB. The festival is made possible by gifts from Mississippi Baptists to the Cooperative Program.

An open performance time has been slotted for lunch on February 22. Individuals and groups who would like to be considered for the open performance time, as well as anyone who desires further information on the festival in general, can contact Ellis at MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3286 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 286. E-mail: hgellis@mbcb.org.

INSPECTION REJECTION

I didn't mean to laugh at the Iraqi official as I sat there and listened to him complain, during a Press Conference, about the inspection teams overstepping their bounds. His complaint, in essence, was that the inspectors were looking at things that the Iraqis did not want them to see, and at times when the Iraqis did not want them to. I mused to myself, "It's just not fair for United Nations inspection teams to be in their country, a country that is supposed to be disarmed, poking around and looking in buildings, plants, and places where they may have hidden some of their wares."

As I sat there and watched him, I again was somewhat amused because it hit me that I, along with Adam and Eve and possibly you, should know how they feel. I thought about our first parents as they were there in the Garden of Eden. Eve took of the forbidden fruit and then gave to Adam and both of them ate. Then, realizing their wrongness and feeling shame, they ran and hid. In the cool of the evening, God came and called out, "Adam, Adam, where are you?" Adam began to feel the awkwardness of God coming where Adam wished He wouldn't and at a time when things were all wrong. I'm sure that Adam and Eve could have held a press conference and said, "We don't like the inspection program that the Lord is carrying out. He has



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

overstepped His boundaries!"

Oh, how many times I have heard someone proclaiming the Word of God and wondered, "How does that guy know what is going on in my heart?" Then, I remember that he didn't and doesn't, but the Scripture says, "The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) God knows what is going on in the secret recesses of our thought life and in the perverted warehouses where we hide our motives.

I can tell you, for a fact, that even beyond hearing some teacher or preacher point out my sins, I have been away from them and the Holy Spirit has shown up, confronted me, convicted me, and inspected my heart. Personally, I, like the Iraqi leaders, wanted to say, "Well, wait a minute! I think somebody is stepping over the boundaries." But, there are no

off-limits with God. Now, when God's inspection team shows up at your heart, it seems that there are a number of possibilities of what you can do, or at least attempt to do. You can...

1. **Reject.** How many of us have either internally and privately, or externally and vocally, said, "I'm not guilty. That's not me. I didn't do anything. Why are you dealing with my heart?" We just reject our wrongdoing, yet at the same time, we know that we are guilty. No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said, "Every mouth be stopped and the entire world may become guilty before God." While we would like to reject what the inspectors find, God may just be telling the truth.

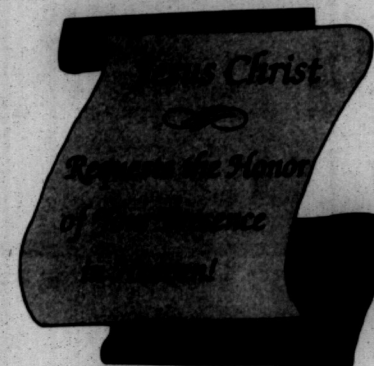
2. **Neglect.** Have you ever experienced God showing up at your heart, pointing out a need in your life, and you kind of push it aside and actually just neglect doing anything about it, perhaps thinking that life will go on and maybe God will forget about it? That is not

going to happen. We can neglect, but in time the inspector from Heaven will come again, and again, and again.

3. **Deflect.** My personal experience and my observation of some of us is that whenever God points out our failures, wrongdoings, attitudes, or disobedience, we tend to want to deflect it to someone else. This is a ploy used by virtually every one of us. For example, in the garden, almost before God could point out his sin, Adam said, "The woman thou gavest me, she..." How many times have we said to God, "It is my mate's fault, or my parent's fault, or society's fault, or the church's fault, or my boss's fault, or the worker's fault..." We deflect our personal responsibility. I have met people who have literally never done wrong, according to them, for they are able to place blame before others in a split-second.

4. **Subject.** Here is what God calls us to do — subject ourselves to the truth that we have sinned. Subject ourselves to a God of love and grace, who has provided for our sins to be paid for and removed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Isn't it wonderful, that instead of playing games with God's inspection crew that comes to our hearts, we can throw ourselves before His mercy, come clean, and be clean.

It is a gift of forgiveness and new life and I can only join with thousands of you in saying thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!



**YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!**

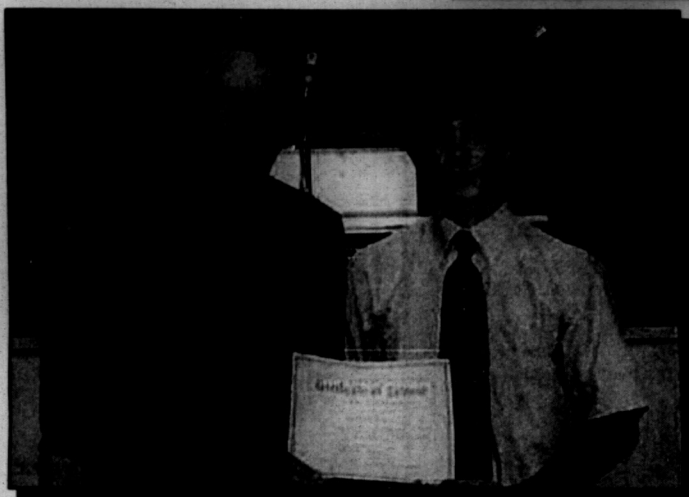
Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name
(John 1:12).

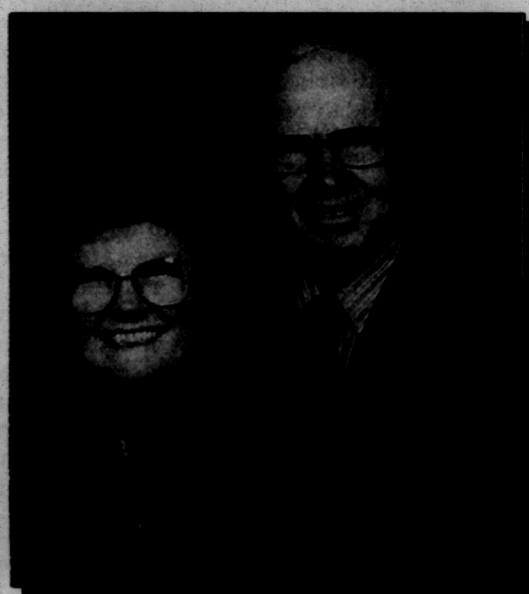
If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Terry Tribble, pastor, and Brandon Powell

Shady Grove Church, Batesville, licensed Brandon Powell to the Gospel Ministry on June 2. Powell is in the Ministerial Program at Blue Mountain College and he is available for pulpit supply. Pictured (from left) are Terry Tribble, pastor, and Powell.



Lisa and Toxie Jarrell

The California Baptist Historical Society introduced the 2002 recipient of the CSBC Heritage award to Toxie Jarrell. Jarrell serves as pastor emeritus and senior adult minister at First Church, Jackson, Calif. Jarrell, a native of Pearl River County, attended Pine Grove Church, Picayune. Pictured (from left) are his wife Lisa and Jarrell.

Moselle Memorial Church, Moselle, ordained Steven Mangum to the ministry on Dec. 1. Pictured (from left) are his wife Shawn, Mangum, and his father Tommy Mangum. Daniel Caldwell is interim pastor. Steven is available for supply and can be reached at (601) 582-5701.

Liberty Church, Carrollton, presented Matt Hamann with a certificate of perfect attendance. Hamann is also a member of RAs and Bible Drill. Pictured (from left) are Riley Ainsworth, pastor, and Hamann.

Friendship Church, Aberdeen, ordained Kenneth Blanton as deacon on Sept. 1. Pictured (from left) are Dale Wilemon and Blanton.

Nikki Roberts, an independent christian artist, will be appearing at three Delta churches to celebrate the release of her new CD. She will be at her home church, First Church, Isola, on Feb. 1 at 11 a.m. On Feb. 2 she will be at First Church, Belzoni, at 10 a.m. and at Eastwood Church, Indianola, that evening for a mini concert and testimony at 6:00 p.m. All are invited.



Nikki Roberts



Dale Wilemon and Kenneth Blanton



Riley Ainsworth, pastor and Matt Hamann

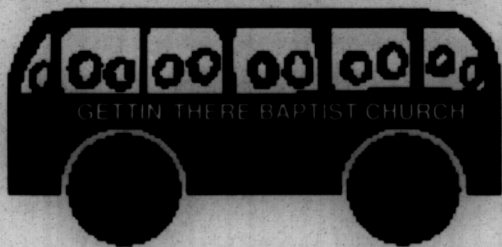


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Honoring God with our Possessions

Sherry and Don Hopkins of Batesville have followed the example found in the Parable of the Five Talents (Matthew 25:15-29). God provided them with a blessing and they decided to invest what they had been given. The Hopkins contacted their pastor, James Bailey, and he directed them to The Mississippi Baptist Foundation. Instead of making a one-time gift, they invested it and now the income will be used to further God's work for years to come. "We were glad that we could choose where the money went. We wanted the gift to stay local and help our community," said Sherry.

By being wise stewards, the income from their initial investment will provide a source of funding for benevolent, charitable, educational and missionary functions of the Lord's work in Batesville and the impact will reach even further. "What a blessing the Foundation has been. They're professional, knowledgeable and will work with you so that your money goes where you want and achieves what you want," stated Sherry. "Another benefit is that Don and I don't have to do anything and we get quarterly reports sent right to us," added Sherry.



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

JUST FOR THE RECORD

First Church, Sledge, and Hollywood Church, Sledge, held their Christmas Cantata at First Church on Dec. 15 at 11 a.m. Jody Hall and Sam Mulloy directed practices and Shirley Jenkins directed the cantata.

New Hope Church, Meadville, held a Winter Bible Study on Jan. 12. Daniel P. Caldwell presented 1st Corinthians. The church will have a Valentine's Banquet on Feb. 14.

Central Church, Byram, gave \$1,016 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Pictured is



Alexander, Applewhite, and Whitten

missionaries of First Church who had birthdays during the Week of Prayer for International Missions. Rob Boyd is pastor. Pictured (from left) are Alexander, Applewhite, and Whitten.

Wesson Church, Wesson, will hold a Wild Game Supper on Feb. 8 at 6 p.m. featuring Crossland Game Calls. David and Brandon Fortenberry will be speaking. There will be hunting seminars and door prizes. A love offering will be taken. For more information, call (601) 643-5722.

The Chimneyville Crafts Gallery, at the Agricultural and Forestry Museum, is open Mon.-Sat. from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Included works are by Patti Henson, Susan Freeman, Charles White, and Ann Baker. Andrea Thompson's pine needle workshop is accepting registration for Monday and

Thursday classes beginning Feb. 10 and lasting for two weeks. For more information, call (601) 981-0019. George Berry Sr.'s wood carving classes are taught every Tuesday from 6-9 p.m. For more information, call (601) 981-0019 or (601) 932-1678.

Tylertown Church, Tylertown, ordained Scott R. Dyar as deacon on Jan. 5. Pictured (from left) are Dyar and his wife Belinda, and Michael W. Glenn, pastor.



Maxine Armstrong and Joe Dowe

Tylertown Church, Tylertown, honored Maxine Armstrong upon her retirement as kitchen supervisor after 17 years of service. Pictured (from left) are Armstrong and Joe Dowe.

Anna Bates, WMU President, standing by the tree. Each light represents \$10 and the bow represents the goal being reached.

First Church, Clinton, celebrated Happy Birthday Lottie on Dec. 4. Honorees, Cecile Alexander, Argentina; LaVerne Applewhite, Indonesia; Indy Whitten, Spain, Argentina, and Equatorial Guinea; were three retired

Anna Bates, WMU president



Scott & Belinda Dyar, and Michael W. Glenn, pastor

Correction

Jim Worthing, who provided worship leadership during the January 9 Legislative Prayer Breakfast, was incorrectly identified in a page one photograph and article in the January 19 issue. The reporter was given incorrect information, and The Baptist Record regrets the error.

Worthing can be contacted at 1583 Martha Drive, Grenada, MS 38901. Telephone: (662) 226-0614.

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REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

New Hope, Meadville: Feb. 16-19; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., lunch served; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Len Turner, Woodstock, Ga., evangelist; Hubert Greer, Wesson, minister of music; Larry W. Yarber, pastor; for more information, call (601) 384-604 or (601) 384 3122.

Grace, Philadelphia: Feb. 9; Bible Study, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m.; potluck lunch, noon; there will be a memorial service remembering deceased members; Dennis Duvall, pastor; for more information, call (601) 656-1988.

First Church, Terry: March 1-2: 150th anniversary; Sat., testimony and praise, 7 p.m.; Sunday, High Attendance Sunday School, 9:15 a.m., worship, 10:30 a.m., dinner on the grounds; John Pace, pastor; letters of remembrance and celebration are being requested for the scrapbook; for more information, call (601) 878-5735 or (601) 878-5597.

BAPTIST COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

The Blue Mountain College Department of Speech and Theatre will present Ladies in Retirement for the spring production. The production will open Feb. 25 and run Feb. 27-March 1. Evening performances will be at 7:30 p.m. in the Garrett Fine Arts Center. A matinee for seniors will be held on Feb. 28 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for students and senior citizens. For more information, call (662) 685-4771, Ext. 131.



Bird, Laird, Kelly, president, Cook, and Burt

The Klasinc and Loncar Guitar Duo will be in concert Jan. 31 at 7:30 p.m. at the Hattiesburg Cultural Center. Admission is free. Miroslav Loncar is the associate professor of music and artist in residence at William Carey College.

Four students with Mississippi ties received doctoral degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in December. Pictured (from left) are Jason Philip Bird, Meridian, pastor at Fifteenth Avenue Church, Meridian, receiving the Doctor of



Klasinc & Loncar

Educational Ministry degree; J.T. Laird, of Florence, pastor at Andrew Chapel Church, Brandon, receiving the Doctor of Ministry degree; Charles S. Kelley Jr., New Orleans Seminary President;

James Rice Cook, Batesville, pastor at Magnolia Church, Laurel, receiving the Doctor of Ministry degree; and John Robert Burt, Tupelo, pastor at Auburn Church, Tupelo, receiving the Doctorate of Ministry degree.

The Blue Mountain College Division of Fine Arts and Speech will present Martha Frances Monroe and June Meyer in a duet piano recital on Feb. 6 at 7:30 p.m. in Garrett Auditorium, Blue Mountain College campus. Selections will include a variety of styles including works of Bach, Schubert, Debussy, Mozart, Quilter, Barber, and Liebau.

STAFF CHANGES

Wynndale Church, Terry, has called Bob Jones as full-time Minister of Music. Jones was previously Minister of Music at First Church, Brookhaven.

First Church, Louise, has called Kerry Burrough as Pastor. Burrough is the former pastorate of Horseshoe Church, Tchula.



Jim P. Thrash has resigned the pastorate of the First Church, Perkinston, to begin serving as pastor of Muldoon

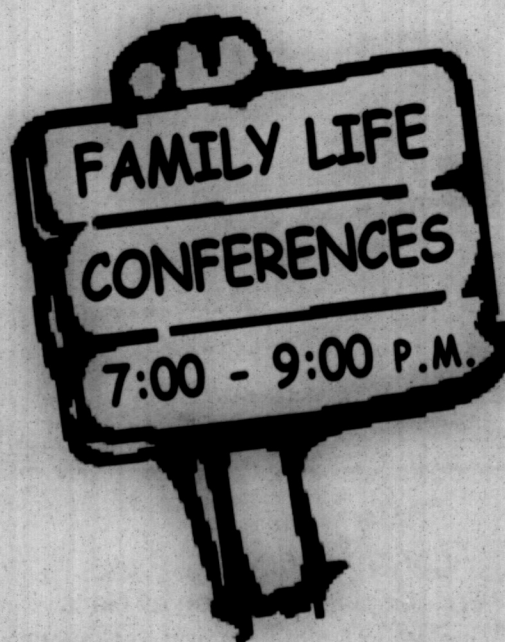
Thrash

Road Church, Anchorage, Ala. Thrash begins his ministry in Alaska Feb. 1.

Indian Springs Church, Petal, called Brad Howard as pastor on Jan. 1. Howard previously served as Minister of Youth at Indian Springs Church, Laurel. He is a graduate of William Carey College and will graduate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in May.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS



1. Tuesday, February 18, 2003 -

FBC, Tunica (662) 363-2665

- "Marriage Enrichment" - Glenn Shows, MBCB Family Ministry Consultant
- "Seniors/Grandparenting" - Barry Worrell, Music & Seniors, Emmanuel, Grenada
- "Single Adults" - Jan Halford, Jackson, co-author of "Ruff-Stuff", for children of divorce

2. Tuesday, February 4, 2003 -

FBC, Magnolia (601) 783-3391

- "Marriage Enrichment" - Dot Day, Hazlehurst, Copiah County Association, Marriage Counselor

3. Tuesday, March 18, 2003 -

Cascilla Baptist Church, Cascilla (close to Grenada) (662) 226-5071

- "Finances" - Jerry Mixon, MBCB Stewardship Director
- "Discipline In The Home" - Glenn Shows, MBCB Family Ministry Consultant
- "Caregiving" - Jan Halford, Jackson

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HEALTHY, GROWING, CHURCH seeking full-time education minister, and full-time youth minister. Send resumes to East Side Baptist Church, 718 E. Ninth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653, or mikeshy@coxinternet.com

A HUMOROUS AND NOSTALGIC look back at a preacher-teacher and would-be comedian growing up in rural Mississippi. "My Brother Was An Only Child", By Arlis Nichols. It's 214 pages of pure pleasure. Send \$15 to Arlis Nichols, 1142 C R 375, Enterprise, MS 39330. For banquet information call (601) 659-9991.

OUT OF TOUCH

Editor:

Your recent editorial regarding the position taken by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, pertaining to Trent Lott was very insightful. It is another reminder to all Baptist Christians as to just how out of touch Land and the other ayatollahs who have controlled the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) for the past 15 years have become. Their self-righteousness and papal-like sense of infallibility should be another wake-up call to all Mississippi Baptists that the time has come for us (the Mississippi Baptist Convention) to follow the lead of our Texas brothers and sisters in Christ and withdraw from the SBC. The declining number of messengers which attend the SBC annual conventions is a resounding statement by the "silent majority" of our frustrations with the dictatorial direction the current leadership has been taking. I can only hope and pray that Land's "lambasting" will motivate concerned leaders in our state convention, like yourself, (who can see "the writing on the wall") to begin the process of disassociating our state convention from the national group.

David C. Frazier
Pascagoula

CP MISUSED

Editor:

The editorial in your January 16 edition pointed out the lambasting of Trent Lott by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, during his December 14 national radio show. I did not hear the program myself but from the content of your editorial it would seem to me that Land's remarks about Lott, and the position Land holds within the Southern Baptist Convention, puts him in a position of doing

to Lott exactly what he is accusing Lott of doing.

As a Christian first and a Southern Baptist second I fail to see where Land's remarks and attitude would have anything to do with building up or adding to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. I for one resent in the strongest way the use of our Cooperative Program (CP) funds by anyone in any way other than to build up and to further the kingdom of God on this earth. I personally feel that Lott was treated unfairly and that his remarks were taken totally out of content and used against him for selfish political purposes by others, exactly the same way that Charles Pickering was treated — but doesn't the Bible teach us that we are to love those that would despise us?

I'll close on the same statement that Land said about Lott, and in my opinion applies to Land even more: "Such a lack of comprehension disqualifies one from national leadership," as president of ERLC, for the use of CP funds for purposes other than the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the winning of lost souls.

Let him without sin cast the first stone — a fitting statement for us all.

Thomas F. Williams
Laurel

NOT SURPRISED

Editor:

I just read your editorial of January 16, "Send in the firing squad." You must be a wonderfully smart and highly intelligent man, because you agree with me almost 100%!

I'm not sure how out-of-place Trent Lott's remarks were. He was merely handing a 100-year-old man a bouquet on his birthday. I see no racist intent in the remark at all but then, unlike so many who did see them that way, I am not a paid socialist muckraker, either.

Where we agree so strongly are your remarks about Richard Land. I do not know Land personally, only as I read about him and his chosen associates in the Southern Baptist Convention in various publications. We should not be surprised at his remarks. From what I know about him, the remarks fit his personality to a "T."

Keep up the good work (and watch your back — you've probably risen a few numbers on their list now!)

Robert M. Moore
Morgan City

SHAMEFUL

Editor:

I agree the Bible was written by man — under the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) was written under the hand of man.

Back in the days when the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was under the hand of God, the BFM would have been presented in the spirit of love, faith, and mercy. These are not included in the present law of the SBC.

Our missionaries have been treated shamefully when they are giving their lives on foreign soil, under the call of God, living in conditions the average American wouldn't consider. Men who called themselves "leaders," living in luxury with every need or desire met, ask our missionaries to conform to their plan instead of God's, or else.

Many of God's people can't sign the BFM because the wording goes against their belief and faith, so many of them resign — losing their retirement and coming home without any financial support.

My prayer is that this year the SBC will stop worshipping the money god and the numbers god. The SBC's goal is always more money, knowing we are the richest Christian group. How wonderful it would be if we as a

church could turn back to Jesus. The results would be amazing. A revival would shake our nation.

Maybe you ask why I wrote this letter. Well, I know people sitting in the pews and the SBC doesn't. However, God hasn't lost control.

Lou Carroll
Biloxi

TRUSTED MISSIONARIES

Editor:

I would like to give my input on the article, "Praise, criticism offered for IMB workers," in the Jan. 23 issue. This is to the people who think it is crazy to go to Moslem countries and be in harm's way when there are so many people in our country who need free help. This is true, but we have something free that they don't have, and that is freedom of religion. The men and women who go to these countries for a few weeks or their whole lives to live and be a part of the local communities are earning the trust of these people. With this trust they are able to do the job that I feel is their top priority: sharing Jesus with others and winning these individuals, families, and whole communities over to the Lord.

I believe the missionaries are paid for their work in a way on which we could never put a dollar amount. I feel the need for spreading the Good Word in foreign countries far outweighs the need for free medical services in the USA. God bless all of you who followed your calling, in whatever country you may be.

Cindy McCallus
Tishomingo



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POCAHONTAS BAPTIST CHURCH: Seeking a Christian student to be Youth Director. Must be committed to children and Youth. Part-time position. Main focus is Bible study Wednesdays and activities for the group. Please contact Rene Virden, Youth Committee Chairperson (601) 362-2152 or mail resume: Pocahontas Baptist Church, Attention: Rene Virden, 4200 Kickapoo Road, Jackson, MS 39209.

SUNFLOWER BAPTIST CHURCH, in Sunflower Miss. is looking for someone to lead the music during the Sunday

morning worship service. A limited knowledge of music is acceptable, but this person should be able to direct a small choir. If interested please contact Nancy Parker at (662) 569-3315 or call pastor Ed Wood at (662) 569-2164.

SLAYDEN BAPTIST CHURCH, SLAYDEN, Miss. (Marshall Association) is seeking an interim Music/Worship leader. Please contact the church office at (662) 252-4559.

DRUMMER NEEDED FOR JACKSON metro area, SBC church. Call (601) 946-9406 for details.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

LITTLE FOREST RANCH

Little Forest Ranch is an interdenominational evangelical Christian camp ministry with 5 summer camp weeks for children (ages 8-11) and 6 summer camp weeks for youth (ages 12-18). LFR is a member of Christian Camping International, USA, and the National Network of Youth Ministries. We are located 2 hours northwest of Jackson, between Louisville and Meridian, in the midst of a 30,000 acre pine tree forest on a beautiful 98 acre lake.

Why not bring your church youth or children's group to LFR for a life-changing spiritual mountain-top experience (without the mountain—this is Mississippi, folks) at a beautiful and secluded place in the forest.

Conferences cancelled

A pair of conferences sponsored by the Pastoral/Leadership Development Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) have been cancelled. The Blvo/Smailler Church Membership Sunday School Director Conference, scheduled for February 20 at Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, Miss., and the Church Leadership Conference, scheduled for February 21 at the same location, have not been cancelled. For more information, contact the director of this department at 520, Jackson, Miss. 39201 or 601/933-1111.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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LAX HCP LADPB GLOX

EAHR CPK, YPLK ARH,

QLKJ: YRK HCRE CLGH

YREAX YLMREK

FOHC DRX.

BEVP RAP: HCOKHJ

Clue: R=O

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Six: Six

Clone or not, Raelians have strange ideas

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — The verdict is still out on whether the Clonaid company actually has achieved the world's first human cloning. But for Christians, the issue illustrates the dangers inherent in a naturalistic worldview, according to the North American Mission Board (NAMB) interfaith evangelism team.

The Raelian movement that is behind the claimed cloning is actually a 29-year-old UFO cult, said Tal Davis, interfaith evangelism manager for NAMB.

The group claims 40,000 members nationwide. Their religion is built on the popular science-fiction notion that extraterrestrials started life on earth thousands of years ago — and that ancient references to the Hebrew God are actually primitive attempts to understand the advanced beings that created them.

The cloning itself, Davis said, is an attempt to mirror the alleged cloning efforts of the ancient alien visitors who cloned themselves to become the first humans. Cloning, then, becomes the Raelians' route to immortality.

"It starts with a totally naturalistic worldview that says that miracles and the divine as described in the Bible cannot be true — and therefore there must be some other explanation," Davis said, "and then in comes this UFO explanation, which on the face of it is totally absurd. ...Yet people who will dismiss Christianity as ancient mythology and fairy tales will

turn around and buy into this UFO-ology."

The Raelian beliefs are traced to an encounter on Dec. 13, 1973, in which French journalist Claude Vorilhon claimed to have been visited by an alien being and asked to establish an "embassy" to welcome the former earth inhabitants back to the planet. Vorilhon now is known among the cult as "Rael."

The biblical connection came in the name of the messenger, who allegedly was named Yahweh, and the name of the alien group, known as the Elohim, which they translate as "those who came from the sky." Students of the Old Testament will recognize both as names for God.

"The Elohim supposedly argued that the ancient peoples mistakenly assumed that these aliens were gods, but they were actually our ancestors who seeded this planet thousands of years ago," Davis said. "They supposedly said they are the offspring of this alien race, and now they have come back to save the people of earth."

The concept of alien forerunners who established civilization on earth is not unique to the Raelians, Davis said. The view became quite popular in

the early 1970s after the publication of Erich von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods* and has proved a mainstay of science fiction from *Battlestar Galactica* in the early 1980s to *The X Files* in recent years.

Davis said, "however, that the claims of Daniken and others have been successfully debunked for many years."

"All of the evidences that were claimed in that

book have perfectly reasonable explanations that don't have to involve UFOs," he said. "PBS did a program 20 years ago in which they took each of these supposed evidences and showed how from a purely historical perspective they can all be explained."

Such ideas are attractive to people because they are naturalistic explanations, Davis said, and even Christians can be vulnerable. The danger is that without a supreme God far more powerful than a mere advanced life form there can be no absolute truth and absolute right and wrong, and in the absence of absolute truth, it becomes easy for charismatic leaders like Rael to convince followers with their own manufactured reality.

"They'll believe him, even if all his information is proved to be false," Davis said. "This could include even some Christians who don't discern and don't take the time to find out or ask themselves, 'Is this compatible with my faith as a Christian?'"

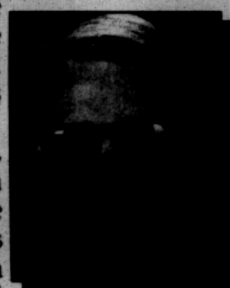
On the issue of cloning, Davis said experiments with animals have shown that cloning is far from the perfect route to reproduction — with numerous problems arising due to the inherited age of cloned cells.

"Think of all the free publicity this organization has received," Davis said. "If enough people hear that kind of stuff, they are going to be intrigued about that and it will draw some new adherents — as outlandish as it is. Even if it's proven to be a fraud it will have proved its purpose of making their movement known."

Rudy Gonzalez, director of interfaith evangelism for

NAMB, said the issue is a reminder of the dangers of bringing presuppositions to the interpretation of Scripture.

"If I come to the Bible thinking it's a book filled with myths, I'm going to read it mythologically," Gonzalez said, "so wherever they see God manifested in the Bible as a supreme being they just say that's the superstition of early man reading the divine into these events — rather than letting the Bible speak authoritatively for itself."



Davis



Gonzalez

'Family-oriented' meeting planned for Phoenix

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — It's shaping up as the most family-oriented Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting yet. That's what Bring the Family! planners are saying about the June 16 Kingdom Family Rally and other events for all ages slated in conjunction with the June 17-18 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix.

"At this year's convention, we're not simply having a rally about the family, but the whole event is designed with the family in mind," said Tom Elliff, a former SBC president who chairs the SBC Council on Family Life.

"There has never been a convention when it has been easier to bring an entire family — and have them involved in the whole convention." Among the family oriented facets of the convention:

- The SBC's first-ever Kingdom Family Rally on Monday evening June 16 featuring Dennis and Barbara Rainey of Family Life Today; singer Steve Green and his wife Maryjean; and Elliff and his wife Jeannie.

The rally also will include testimonies from various SBC leaders and Baptist families; conference leader and author Gary Chapman; and video segments from James and Shirley Dobson of Focus on the Family; and Bible teacher and author Beth Moore.

The rally will be part of the SBC Pastors' Conference, a June 15-16 gathering that also will be devoted to the family. The conference is open to church staff members' families as well as laypeople interested in bolstering marriage in America.

- An SBC Children's Conference for children in grades one through six, a new format for previous years' day camp which will provide teaching and activities from Monday through Wednesday. The Denton Brothers Quartet — Michael, Christopher, David, Brian — from San Jose, Calif., will lead the conference.

- Convention child care, to be available from Sunday

through Wednesday for infants through children who have finished kindergarten.

- Student Night, slated for Tuesday, June 17, with a climbing wall and other activities opening at 4:30 p.m. and a worship service and concert at 6:30, sponsored by the SBC North American Mission Board.

Various details about the Kingdom Family Rally, the June 17-18 SBC annual meeting, and other related activities are being posted and regularly updated at the SBC website, www.SBC.net.

Registration for the SBC Children's Conference and convention child care will open Feb. 15, with registration specifics to be announced shortly.

"It is the goal of our SBC Council on Family Life, the Pastors' Conference, LifeWay and all our entities to 'put Southern Baptists on the map' as being good for every community because we are good for the family," said Elliff, pastor of the Oklahoma City-

area First Southern Baptist Church in Del City.

"Having a great family attendance in Phoenix," he said, "will make a bold statement to the world at large — a world of people desperately seeking answers for their own families."

The SBC Council on Family Life was created during the 2000 SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., and functions under the auspices of the SBC Executive Committee. Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, is a member of the Council.

"Strengthening families," SBC President Jack Graham has said, "is one of the most important things we're going to be doing as Southern Baptists."

The rally will "encourage our pastors and laity to develop disciples among their own children and grow strong, healthy marriages and to model for the culture the family as God has planned it and designed it," Graham, pastor of the Dallas-area Prestonwood Church in Plano, has noted.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

The Bible: Its Origin

Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:12-21

By Shirley Stough

Many Christians have had access to a Bible their entire lives. Through the years, they have read it, memorized its passages, learned its precepts, consulted it as a sourcebook for life, and utilized it to present God's salvation plan. They have accepted it as the inspired word of God (1 Peter 3:16). Conversely, there are many others who believe it to be nothing more than a collection of stories — just another book. How can we Christians explain to others that this best selling book of all time is not just another book but is definitely the inspired word of God?

One explanation is to use Scripture to find the source of its revelation. One such Scripture, Hebrews 1:1-2, reveals that God spoke during Old Testament and

New Testament times. In Old Testament times He revealed Himself to prophets at different times in history through various methods such as dreams, visions, and angels. The word "prophets" is probably a reference to all people that God spoke to and through in Old Testament times; other than prophets, He spoke to kings, wise men, and song writers, telling them what to say to mankind. Although His revelation was not given in a complete form to any one person, it was a progressive message, which was finally fulfilled in the New Testament.

In New Testament Times, God revealed Himself to man in the incarnate Jesus. God's intention was that we would see the likeness of Him in Jesus. The New Testament revelation, superior to the former revela-

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tions, was a one-time complete revelation to us from God through only one messenger — Jesus. The Bible, inspired by God, is the only book that contains the true revelation of God. Peter wrote to the early Christians to encourage them to live their faith in the midst of persecution and doctrinal challenge. He reminded them that because of God's gift of grace through Jesus they have a new nature and a new life-style in Christ. Peter says that he is obligated to remind them of the truth of God's word. If he does not remind them, he thinks they might forget about God's truth and become backslidden Christians. Sensing that his death might be near, Peter feels an urgency to remind them now, and he hopes that he can remind them even after his death through his writings.

Peter was convinced of the trustworthiness of the gospel revelation because of what he had witnessed during Jesus' ministry. In his letter he used one example of what he witnessed — the trans-

figuration of Jesus. On the mountain during the transfiguration, Peter, James, and John heard the voice of God say that Jesus was His Son. God's statement proved that Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled in Jesus as the Messiah. Peter knew that the message he proclaimed was not a myth or a cleverly made-up story. He and other apostles knew that their accounts of Jesus' life were fact and could be trusted. He urged his readers to pay attention to God's message delivered through those to whom God had revealed Himself. The message would be like a light in a dark place. It would show them the way. Thank God we still have His word — and not cleverly devised myths — to guide us through a corrupt world until Jesus comes again.

Peter has given strong evidence for Christians to believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture. He has emphasized that true prophecy came from God Himself as He spoke through the Holy Spirit to men who wrote God's actual words in a collection of books and letters —

the Bible. Prophets did not attempt to pass off their own views as God's views. The true messengers carried a message that was directed and protected by the Holy Spirit. The messages that prophets delivered were God's words — messages the prophets would never have said themselves. Although each prophet had a different personality, which was reflected in his delivery, he had one source — God. If we did not have Old Testament Scripture, we would not know how God so lovingly planned our salvation by sending Jesus to save us.

The Bible is a unified book developed around the framework of Jesus and His role in God's salvation work. It contains God's standards for living our lives. We can trust what it says because its source is divine. Based on eye-witness testimony and the fulfillment of prophecy through Jesus, we know that God is the source of the Bible.

Stough is member of First Church, Picayune.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

"Standing for the Truth"

John 18:4-5, 19-23, 33-38

By Don Wilson

Jesus had taught His disciples, prayed for them, and prepared them for the time when He would no longer be with them. Now the time had come for Him to die. They still did not understand how this Messiah who had come to save them from their sins could actually save them without staying alive.

I. TRUE IDENTITY (John 18:4-5)

Satan's plan was already in motion. He had already planted the plot in the mind and heart of his guinea pig-Judas Iscariot. So Jesus had led His devoted group of disciples to a familiar meeting place. I am sure they had learned there, prayed there, and even stayed there many times before. However, this night was different. Suddenly people came from everywhere. The colorful,

flowing robes of the Pharisees and chief priests shone brilliantly amid the lights of the candles and torches. Temple guard with drawn spears and swords towered over this tiny band of ordinary, seemingly helpless men. Anyone who saw this display of strength must have thought a hidden, hardened criminal had been located and was being brought to justice. Instead Judas stepped forward to plant a kiss that would identify Jesus as the One they had come for.

The disciples were startled and scared. But Jesus knew (verse 4). He already knew exactly what was coming for Him. Remember He had already been telling these guys it was coming. Then He did it. Jesus stepped forward and identified Himself as Jesus of Nazareth, the very one they

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sought. Unprepared for such boldness and honesty, the entire posse drew back and fell to the ground (verse 6). Jesus identified Himself again requesting release for the rest of His group (verses 7-8).

Notice the contrast between the boldness of Jesus and the deceit of Judas and his newfound allies. They thought someone would be needed to identify Him, and then Jesus boldly stepped forward and willingly gave Himself up. That was what He has always been about-giving Himself up for us. Jesus asserted His identity while His followers turned and ran to the thickets. Many of us still run when we have opportunity to stand and be counted as a follower of Jesus.

II. TRUE WORDS (John 18:19-23)

With Jesus in custody, the vigilantes went for the kill. They had Him now, with no crowd. Somehow a speedy trial had to be engineered so that their mission could be accomplished. A legal trial was not important at this moment; an illegal one

would suffice. Annas, a past high priest (called high priest in verse 19), would know what to do. He was the father-in-law of the current high priest and the one who really held the power. Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and His teaching. Jesus asserted that His teaching had been done openly in public places. These same Pharisees and priests had been present when Jesus taught. "Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said" (verse 21). When slapped for His response, Jesus urged them to bear witness to any evil he had done (verse 23). Later it would be those who heard Him that would indeed identify Jesus and the validity of His words to a world that needed to hear about the grace of God unleashed on those who would listen.

III. TRUE CONVICTIONS (John 18:33-38)

Jesus was led to Caiaphas, the current high priest, who rubber-stamped the decision already rendered by Annas and the ruling body of the Jews. On to the Roman governor, Pilate, He was taken. Pilate quizzed the Jews about the accusation and they

instantly turned defensive: "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him" (verse 30). When Pilate told them to judge Him themselves, they finally revealed their real intentions. "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death" (verse 31). They did not want justice; they wanted Jesus dead.

Pilate left the Jews outside his palace and returned to question Jesus. His identity is again the focus. He wanted to know if Jesus was the King of the Jews. Jesus questioned the source Pilate's reasoning, and then spoke of His kingdom. "My kingdom is not of this world.... Now my kingdom is not from here" (verse 36). Then Jesus clearly and plainly asserted the truth that HE WAS KING and that anyone who is of the truth will hear Him. Pilate's final question was: "What is truth?" Without waiting for the answer, Pilate walked away from The Truth Himself (John 14:6). He asserted the innocence of this King, though he never fully accepted His identity as his own King.

Wilson is pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, Dumas.

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no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

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Homosexual proposal tabled in Nashville

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A proposed change in Nashville law validating the homosexual lifestyle and giving no exemption to religious institutions in employment decisions involving homosexuals was deferred during a Jan. 21 council meeting until February.

Approximately 75 Christians in the gallery of the city hall building wore "NO" stickers, urging rejection of the measure.

More than 300 supporters of the proposal — which has passed two of the required three readings — turned out on the steps of city hall to voice their opinion. On the opposite side of the building, strident anti-homosexual protestor Fred Phelps, pastor of the Westboro Church, a non-Southern Baptist Convention congregation in Topeka, Kan., led about six followers, including a 10-year-old granddaughter, in a vicious condemnation of homosexuals.

The amendment has concerned Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) officials charged with the responsibility of recommending convention sites for the SBC annual meeting. Nashville has been selected as the site of the 2005 SBC annual meeting.

Also voicing concern: LifeWay Christian Resources, with more than 1,500 employees in its Nashville headquarters, and the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, also based in Nashville.

PRO-HOMOSEXUAL — Students from Vanderbilt University in Nashville were among 350 people who supported a homosexual rights proposal on Nashville City Council's Jan. 21 agenda. (BP photo by Morris Abernathy)

Under the Nashville proposal, the words "sexual orientation" would be added to Metro Nashville's Fair Employment and Housing Law stipulating that people cannot be discriminated against because of their "race, color, religion, national origin or sex." The word, "sex," meanwhile, would be changed to "gender."

The proposal, as currently drafted, does not exempt churches, religious organizations, or Christian business owners who believe that homosexuality is a sin.

A separate measure was introduced Jan. 21 that would provide an exemption for religious organizations.

No date was set for further consideration of the measures.



PRESSING THE ISSUE — Jack Wilkerson (left), vice president for business and finance with the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, voices opposition to a proposed Nashville homosexual rights law in a January 21 hallway conversation with City Council member Carolyn Tucker. (BP photo by Morris Abernathy)

War scars planted deeply in Lebanese seminarian

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Smyrna Khalaf was 5,620 miles away from New York when she heard the shocking news of Sept. 11, 2001, but as she sat watching the news on television, memories of war in her own country of Lebanon were vivid in her mind.

"When [9/11] happened, we just went to the TV and we were watching, and it was such a tragic thing," Khalaf said. "Everyone was sad."

Khalaf, who is in her first year of studies for a master of arts in marriage and family counseling at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, said one of her initial responses to the events of Sept. 11 was the fear that the destruction would stir "fanatics" in Lebanon to war again.

Lebanon was plagued by civil war for approximately 15 years and Khalaf, who was on the Texas seminary campus last fall for memorial services commemorating the one-year mark since the terrorist attacks, said that when she grew up memorial services would have been necessary daily.

"Muslims would kill Christians [during the war] just because they are Christians, because they have the Christian name. Even Christians killed Muslims as well because this was huge fighting. We don't want that to start again in Beirut," said Khalaf, Southwestern's first international student from Lebanon.

The fighting in her native land

did not stop until she was 14 years old. "No one knew what time you were going to die," said Khalaf, now 25.

The war became somewhat routine, she said, that the impact of mortar shells was just another sound in the day. "I was brought up hearing all the noises, being in [a] shelter," she said.

Fear began to set in as she grew older. She became more afraid because, she said, "You start to know what life is about and the meaning of life and that you want to survive."

As she sat with her mother one night in 1984 in the middle of the war, her mother asked if she knew where she would go if she died — an all-too-real possibility.

"I said I don't know, and that night she explained the whole salvation story, and I committed myself to Jesus that night," Khalaf said.

Lebanon still bears the scars of civil war, but Khalaf also has witnessed some of the nation's healing. Muslims and Christians remained mostly in separate parts of Beirut during the war, but today those same lines are no longer drawn, she said.

Khalaf attended college after the war in a part of Beirut that was considered a Muslim area during the hostilities.

"It wasn't difficult for me to interact with them [Muslim students] or for them to interact with me," she said. "It was a new generation."

Khalaf said many Americans mistakenly believe Lebanon is

a Muslim country. Although Islam has a strong presence in Lebanon, Christianity does as well, she said.

"It's a free country," she said. "You have Christians and you have Muslims."

Still, not every person who bears the name Christian in Lebanon — much like in America — actually has a personal relationship with Christ. Individuals in Lebanon who bear Christian and Muslim names, she said, need to hear the Gospel.

Khalaf said she seeks to share Christ with whomever God puts in her path, rather than seeking to share Christ exclusively with Muslims.

"I think God has given us a great opportunity [in Lebanon] because we can spread out the Gospel easily and you can talk wherever you want. You can have churches wherever you want."

While Khalaf was teaching English as a Second Language to a group of young people last year, God allowed her to serve as a counselor to them.

Many of the young people she taught had not finished high school and were from predominantly low-income families, she said.

"The younger generation has been brought up thinking more modernly."

"Our parents lived in the war. It was different and they were very protective because there was war," she said.



MUSICAL ESCAPE — Southwestern Seminary student Smyrna Khalaf, the seminary's first Lebanese international student, was 14 when civil war raged in her native land. Moments of playing the piano, which transports her away from her vivid memories of the war, punctuate her studies at the seminary. (BP photo by Richard McCormack)